

Capitola bans self-service station conversions

By BOB SMITH

Reacting to fears by local service station owners that at least Capitola stations are about to become "self-serve-only," the Capitola City Council passed an emergency ordinance banning the conversion of any of the service stations in Capitola from either full-service to self-serve, or to any other use.

The ordinance will self-destruct in 90 days if the council takes no further action on the subject.

The council reacted swiftly on the issue, which wasn't included on the council's published agenda, after Bob DiCiano, who represents the county's service station dealers, told the council that there are plans to convert the Union Oil service station at 41st Avenue and Gross Road (near the freeway off-ramps) to self-service and that there are similar plans afoot for the Chevron service station at 41st Avenue

and Capitola Road.

Mayor Michael Routh asked the council to hear DiCiano's presentation, and suggested that the council reconsider its earlier position to not follow the County Board of Supervisors' lead in banning service station conversion.

DiCiano said the gasoline dealers in the county are concerned "about the new program of all the oil companies to close at least 50 percent of their service stations in California and convert at least half of the remaining stations to "self-serve."

DiCiano said the oil companies' goal is to realize the maximum profit from gasoline sales while cutting the price to the lowest level.

That will impact people who need to have their cars repaired, or routinely maintained.

The elderly, the handicapped and others unable to pump their own gasoline, check the water

and fluid levels in their engines, and even inflate their tires to the correct pressure, would be hard pressed to find the services they need if the current conversion plans go into effect, DiCiano said.

State law now requires stations with full-service islands to serve the elderly and handicapped, even at the self-serve islands, but that would not apply if there were only self-service at a particularly service station.

Routh said there's another factor to consider in Capitola. The city's service stations now buy about \$7,000 in replacement parts from local auto supply houses each month. That translates into about \$20,000 in monthly repair business that, Routh said, "would be lost to Capitola."

The motion to approve an emergency ban on conversions was made by Councilman Robert Bucher, seconded by Dennis Beltram, and passed 4-0

with councilman Jerry Clarke absent from the meeting.

In other business, the council:

✓ Adopted an ordinance designating the land on the west side of 38th Avenue between Capitola Road and Brommer Street as a combination of medium-density residential and neighborhood commercial. The zoning is a precursor to Capitola's annexation of the land which is now pending before the county Local Agency Formation Commission.

✓ Decided to issue no winter street vending permits in Capitola Village. The city decides twice a year the number of street vending permits will be issued in the summer and winter seasons in the village. This winter, the council had one application from Bill Keuttel, owner of El Toro Bravo. He proposed setting up a mobile taco cart. Mayor Michael Routh objected to the proposal, saying Keuttel would be com-

peting with other "inside" restaurants.

Councilman Bob Bucher raised another issue. The county health department, Bucher told the other councilmembers, has told Keuttel that he must operate the hot food cart within 75 feet of a public restroom. That effectively limits Keuttel to the area around the city-owned Esplanade Park across Monterey Avenue from the El Toro Bravo.

City Manager Steve Burrell, who issues permits based on the number allowed by the council, said that restriction would mean the El Toro Bravo cart was not "mobile" and would not meet the ordinance requirements.

The council voted unanimously to set the winter vending permit limit at "zero" this year, and told Burrell to bring the whole street vending ordinance back for review this fall, when the possibility of banning all street vending in the future will be considered.

✓ Will hold a public hearing Oct. 11 on a proposal to ban on-street parking on Park Avenue from Monterey Avenue to Coronado Avenue to accommodate bicycle lanes on both sides of the street.

✓ Will hold a public hearing on a flood plain ordinance Oct. 11.

✓ Approved a request from the Santa Cruz Art League to hold an art show Oct. 13 in the Capitola Theater parking lot.